

SENATE—Monday, September 13, 1999

The Senate met at 12 noon and was called to order by the President pro tempore [Mr. THURMOND].

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Our guest Chaplain, Father Paul Lavin, pastor of St. Joseph's on Capitol Hill, Washington, DC, will now give the prayer.

PRAYER

The guest Chaplain, Father Paul Lavin, offered the following prayer:

In Psalm 103 David sings:

Bless the Lord, O my soul
and all my being bless His holy name.
Bless the Lord, O my soul
and forget not all His benefits.
He pardons all your iniquities,
He heals all your ills.
He redeems your life from destruction,
He crowns you with kindness and com-
passion.

He does not always chide,
nor does He keep His wrath forever.
Not according to our sins does He deal
with us,

nor does He requite us according to our
crimes.

For as the heavens are high above the
Earth
so surpassing is His kindness toward
those who fear Him.

As far as east is from the west,
so far has He put our transgressions
from us.

Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God, You have revealed Your glory to all nations. God of power and might, wisdom and justice, through Your authority is rightly administered, laws enacted, and judgment is decreed. Let the light of Your divine wisdom direct the deliberations of the Senate and shine forth in all the proceedings and laws formed for our rule and government. May they seek to preserve peace, promote national happiness, and continue to bring us the blessings of liberty and equality.

We likewise commend to Your unbounded mercy all citizens of the United States, that we may be blessed in the knowledge and sanctified in the observance of Your holy law. May we be preserved in union and that peace which the world cannot give; and, after enjoying the blessings of this life, be admitted to those which are eternal.

We pray to You, who are Lord and God, for ever and ever. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable PAT ROBERTS, a Senator from the State of Kansas, led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

**RECOGNITION OF THE ACTING
MAJORITY LEADER**

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROBERTS). The acting majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, today the Senate will be in a period of morning business until 2 p.m. Following morning business, the Senate will resume consideration of the Interior appropriations bill. As a reminder, cloture motions were filed on Friday on S.J. Res. 33 denouncing the offer of clemency to Puerto Rican terrorists and on the Hutchison amendment regarding oil royalties. These cloture votes have been scheduled for 5 p.m. today and may be followed by additional votes on judicial nominations. It is hoped that action on the Interior appropriations bill can be completed by tomorrow and that the Senate can begin consideration of the bankruptcy reform bill.

I thank colleagues for their attention.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, there will now be a period for the transaction of morning business not to extend beyond the hour of 2 p.m., with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes. Under the previous order, the time until 1 p.m. shall be under the control of the distinguished Senator from Wyoming, Mr. THOMAS.

SENATE CHALLENGES

Mr. THOMAS. Mr. President, as was noted, there are 2 hours of morning business. My associates are going to undertake for the first hour to talk a little bit about the challenges that we face over the next month, 2 months. By the end of this month, of course, we are to have completed the appropriations, and we will be moving forward with that. We will be dealing with the administration and with the President on their completion. We hope that it will not end up in a closing down of Government but, rather, finding some consensus as to how we deal with our budget for next year.

We are challenged by different philosophies, of course, as to what that spending ought to be; we are always challenged by a difference of view as to what the priorities are. That is the nature of our body.

So, Mr. President, I would like now to yield to my friend, the Senator from Arkansas, for 15 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The distinguished Senator from Arkansas is recognized.

Mr. HUTCHINSON. I thank the Chair.

TAX RELIEF

Mr. HUTCHINSON. Mr. President, I rise today to address for a few minutes the tax relief package that the Senate passed before the August recess.

I had the opportunity during the August recess to travel much of Arkansas. I was in 27 counties in Arkansas in about a month. So we were very busy. In each one of those counties there were opportunities for people to express their opinions and to talk about issues that were of concern to them. We heard much about the farm crisis. I know the Presiding Officer has been very involved in trying to fashion a farm policy that is going to allow family farmers to survive, be viable, and has been very involved in the ag policy of this country. We have heard a lot of concerns about agriculture.

I also heard a lot about the tax package, and there were a lot of questions. I want to take a few minutes today to talk about what I heard and what I shared about the tax relief package that we passed in the Senate and the conference that was agreed upon with the House. I think it is responsible and provides much-needed relief for the American taxpayer.

I think that is the first thing we have to realize—how much there is a need for tax relief. People say, well, the economy is booming; we are doing fine; people are fine; no one really wants a tax cut. I think the reality is far different.

Under the Clinton administration, taxes have risen to the highest level in peacetime history—almost 21 percent of the gross domestic product. When you compare that to the 1950s and the Eisenhower years, the tax burden upon the American people measured—there are lots of ways of measuring “tax burden,” but one of the most helpful, I think, is in terms of the gross domestic product. At that time, it was about 15 percent of GDP; it is now 21 percent of GDP. And it took that last leap when Congress passed and the President signed the 1993 tax hike.